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Letters to the Editor

Dare We Shrug Off Infamy?

Thanks to Suzanne Garment for her excellent piece on the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II by the Bulgarian puppets of Moscow (Capital Chronicle, June 15).

It is indeed astonishing that so few in the media have paid heed to this monstrous crime. It must rank among the worst in history, for it shows clearly Communism's utter contempt for every individual and for every human value. This was not simply an attack upon the head of the Catholic church but upon everyone who stands for freedom and order in society.

Congratulations also to Ms. Garment for the measured tone and calm nature of her writing. It is a pleasure to read such fine prose.

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New York

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Although I agree with Suzanne Garment's premise that the State Department and other U.S. government agencies have soft-pedaled the "Bulgarian Connection," I take exception to her contention that the Bulgarian story is "sinking like a stone" on Capitol Hill.

On June 7—three days before Claire Sterling publicly summarized the Italian state prosecutor's report on the plot to kill the pope—the House Foreign Affairs Committee Task Force on International Narcotics Control held hearings to investigate the Government of Bulgaria's involvement in narcotics trafficking, gun-running and international terrorism.

To its credit, the Drug Enforcement Administration came down hard on Bulgarian terrorism during the hearing. "The Government of Bulgaria has established a policy of encouraging and facilitating and trafficking of narcotics through the corporate veil of KINTEX . . . (and) KINTEX assists the flow of guns and ammunition to left-wing insurgency groups in Turkey and Lebanon," said John Lawn, Acting Deputy Administrator of the DEA. Paul Henze, a consultant with the Rand Corporation, added: "Narcotics and terrorism are two sides of the same coin. . . . Nothing Bulgaria does can be regarded separately from the larger framework of pernicious and destructive Soviet operations directed against the Free World. They range from propaganda and disinformation to support of terrorism and assassination."

Only the State Department was equivocal. Deputy Assistant Secretary Mark Palmer labeled the evidence against Bulgaria "allegations," and he added that virtually nothing more can be done to punish

Bulgaria. Similarly, when Secretary of State Shultz testified before the full Foreign Affairs Committee on June 13, he refused to spell out sanctions we might impose on Bulgaria.

Tougher sanctions are clearly available. For one, the Secretary of State should attempt to reconvene the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods. Bulgaria now uses this Convention to truck arms, heroin and, if the Italian prosecutor is correct, assassins throughout Europe and the Middle East. Second, mounting evidence suggests that Bulgaria has shifted a substantial portion of its smuggling operation to the seas. The State Department should thus consider abrogating our bi-lateral maritime transport agreement with Bulgaria. Finally, the Executive Branch should—at the very least—conduct a full-scale review of possible U.S. and multi-lateral sanctions against Bulgaria.

Meantime, those of us in Congress who are pursuing the Bulgarian connection will continue to hold the Administration's feet to the fire. Perhaps this heat will yield more action, and less ambivalence, from Foggy Bottom and the White House.

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The attempted assassination of John Paul II reminds one of a similar "Bulgarian connection" involving the successful assassination of King Alexander I of Yugoslavia at Marseilles on Oct. 9, 1934. Investigation showed that more than one assassin was involved. Besides a number of Croatian terrorists, there was a Bulgarian named Georgiev, a member of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, involved in this elaborate scheme to eliminate Yugoslavia's king, whose policies were unsuitable to the political aspirations of Mussolini's Italy.

In spite of all the evidence linking Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria with this murder—in which M. Barthou, the French Foreign Minister, also lost his life—the Western democracies were reluctant to condemn the mentioned countries for fear of political consequences. This was the beginning of "appeasement" politics.

It seems that history is repeating itself. Instead of the IMRO and fascist Italy, there is the KGB and Bulgaria, as evidence seems to point out, directly or indirectly involved in the plot to murder John

Paul II. Is our reluctance to call a spade a spade not a repetition of an appeasement policy as in 1934?

ALEXANDER C. NIVEN

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On the CIA's and the media's cover-up of Soviet involvement in the assassination attempt on the Pope: we have been here before:

From an abundance of examples in the Thirties, I quote Geoffrey Dawson, the influential editor of the London Times, who doctored and sometimes killed the dispatches of his Berlin correspondent.

"I do my utmost, night after night," he wrote about the Nazis, "to keep out of the paper anything that might hurt their susceptibilities. . . . I shall be more grateful than I can say for any explanation or guidance, for I have always been convinced that the peace of the world depends much more than on anything else upon our getting into reasonable relations with Germany." (History of the Times, Part II, p. 734.)

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